

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Original) A gaming machine including:

a base game of chance having random outcomes which include predetermined winning outcomes, wherein said machine pays winnings upon the occurrence of any of said winning outcomes;

said machine being adapted to allocate feature qualifying attributes such that accumulation of one or more predetermined feature qualifying attributes opens a window of opportunity allowing a player to trigger a feature game at any time of their choosing whilst said window of opportunity is open; and

said window of opportunity remains open until said player no longer holds said one or more predetermined feature qualifying attributes.

2. (Original) A gaming machine according to claim 1 wherein different types of said feature qualifying attributes are represented by corresponding feature qualifying symbols.

3. (Currently Amended) A gaming machine according to claim 1 ~~or 2~~ wherein said feature qualifying attributes are awarded at random.

4. (Currently Amended) A gaming machine according to ~~any one of~~ claims 1 ~~to 2~~ wherein said feature qualifying attributes are awarded in the event of said base game being played a predetermined number of times.

5. (Currently Amended) A gaming machine according to ~~any one of~~ claims 1 ~~to 2~~ wherein said feature qualifying attributes are awarded during play of said base game on the occurrence of predetermined attribute awarding combinations.

6. (Currently Amended) A gaming machine according to ~~any of the preceding claims~~ claim 1 wherein accumulated feature qualifying attributes used to trigger said feature game are removed from a player's tally.

7. (Currently Amended) A gaming machine according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 5~~ wherein said accumulated feature qualifying attributes are removed at random.

8. (Currently Amended) A gaming machine according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 5~~ wherein said accumulated feature qualifying attributes are removed on the occurrence of a predetermined attribute removing combination occurring during the play of said base game.

9. (Currently Amended) A gaming machine according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 5~~ wherein said accumulated feature qualifying attributes are removed in the event of said base game being played a predetermined number of times.

10. (Currently Amended) A gaming machine according to ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1 wherein the characteristics of said feature game is dependent on the accumulation of predetermined feature qualifying attributes.

11. (Original) A gaming machine according to claim 10 wherein said feature game includes free games.

12. (Currently Amended) A gaming machine according to claim 10 ~~or claim 11~~ wherein said feature game includes win multipliers.

13. (Currently Amended) A gaming machine according to ~~any one of claims 10 to 12~~ wherein said feature game includes substitute symbols.

14. (Currently Amended) A gaming machine according to ~~any one of claims 10 to 13~~ wherein said feature game includes bonus prizes.

15. (Currently Amended) A gaming machine according to ~~any one of~~ claims 10 to 14 wherein said feature game includes held reels.

16. (Currently Amended) A gaming machine according to ~~any one of~~ claims 10 to 15 wherein said feature game includes bonus reels.

17. (Currently Amended) A gaming machine according to ~~any one of~~ claims 10 to 16 wherein said feature game includes bonus scatter symbols.

18. (Currently Amended) A gaming machine according to ~~any one of~~ claims 10 to 17 wherein said feature game includes bonus substitute symbols.

19. (Currently Amended) A gaming machine according to ~~any one of~~ ~~claims 10-18~~ claim 1 wherein said feature game includes bonus trigger combinations which award further feature qualifying attributes.

20. (Currently Amended) A gaming machine according to ~~any one of the~~ ~~preceding claims~~ claim 1 wherein varying levels of said window of opportunity are provided such that higher levels are perceived by a player as returning increased winnings.

21. (Currently Amended) A gaming machine according to ~~any one of the~~ ~~preceding claims~~ claim 1 wherein said feature qualifying attributes are in the form of jackpot qualifying attributes.

22. (Original) A gaming machine according to claim 21 wherein said machine is configured to provide a jackpot feature game which can be triggered by a player upon the accumulation of one or more predetermined jackpot qualifying attributes.

23. (Original) A gaming machine according to claim 22 wherein player interaction is required to determine if a jackpot prize is won during said jackpot feature game.

24. (Original) A gaming machine according to claim 23 wherein a jackpot screen will appear for facilitating said player interaction when a player triggers a jackpot feature game.

25. (Currently Amended) A gaming machine according to claim 23 ~~or claim 24~~ wherein said jackpot prize is contributed from a stand-alone machine.

26. (Currently Amended) A gaming machine according to claim 23 ~~or claim 24~~ wherein said jackpot prize is contributed from a number of machines networked together.

27. (Currently Amended) A gaming machine according to ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1 wherein said base game is a spinning reel type using a simulation of five adjacent wheels to present an array of randomly selected symbols in five columns and three rows.

28. (Original) A method of operating a gaming machine, the method including the steps of: providing a base game of chance having random outcomes which include predetermined winning outcomes, wherein said machine pays winnings upon the occurrence of any of said winning outcomes;

said machine being adapted to allocate feature qualifying attributes such that accumulation of one or more predetermined feature qualifying attributes opens a window of opportunity allowing a player to trigger a feature game at any time of their choosing whilst said window of opportunity is open; and

said window of opportunity remains open until said player no longer holds said one or more predetermined feature qualifying attributes.

29. (Original) A method according to claim 28 wherein different types of said feature qualifying attributes are represented by corresponding feature qualifying symbols.

30. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 28 ~~or claim 29~~ wherein said feature qualifying attributes are awarded at random.

31. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 28 ~~or claim 29~~ wherein said feature qualifying attributes are awarded in the event of said base game being played a predetermined number of times.

32. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 28 ~~or claim 29~~ wherein said feature qualifying attributes are awarded during play of said base game on the occurrence of predetermined attribute awarding combinations.

33. A method according to claims 28 ~~to claim 32~~ wherein accumulated feature qualifying attributes used to trigger said feature game are removed from a player's tally.

34. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any one of~~ claims 28 ~~to 32~~ wherein said accumulated feature qualifying attributes are removed at random.

35. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any one of~~ claims 28 ~~to 32~~ wherein said accumulated feature qualifying attributes are removed on the occurrence of a predetermined attribute removing combination occurring during the play of said base game.

36. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any one of~~ claims 28 ~~to 32~~ wherein said accumulated feature qualifying attributes are removed in the event of said base game being played a predetermined number of times.

37. A method according to ~~any one of~~ claims 28 ~~to 36~~ wherein the characteristics of said feature game is dependent on the accumulation of predetermined feature qualifying attributes.

38. (Original) A method according to claim 37 wherein said feature game includes free games.

39. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 37 ~~or claim 38~~ wherein said feature game includes win multipliers.

40. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any one of~~ claims 37 ~~to 39~~ wherein said feature game includes substitute symbols.

41. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any one of~~ claims 37 ~~to 40~~ wherein said feature game includes bonus prizes.

42. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any one of~~ claims 37 ~~to 41~~ wherein said feature game includes held reels.

43. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any one of~~ claims 37 ~~to 42~~ wherein said feature game includes bonus reels.

44. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any one of~~ claims 37 ~~to 43~~ wherein said feature game includes bonus scatter symbols.

45. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any one of~~ claims 37 ~~to 44~~ wherein said feature game includes bonus substitute symbols.

46. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any one of~~ claims 37 ~~to 45~~ wherein said feature game includes bonus trigger combinations which award further feature qualifying attributes.

47. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any one of~~ claims 28 to 46 wherein varying levels of said window of opportunity are provided such that higher levels are perceived by a player as returning increased winnings.

48. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any one of~~ claims 28 to 47 wherein said feature qualifying attributes are in the form of jackpot qualifying attributes.

49. (Original) A method according to claim 48 wherein said machine is configured to provide a jackpot feature game which can be triggered by a player upon the accumulation of one or more predetermined jackpot qualifying attributes.

50. (Original) A method according to claim 49 wherein player interaction is required to determine if a jackpot prize is won during said jackpot feature game.

51. (Original) A method according to claim 50 wherein a jackpot screen will appear for facilitating said player interaction when a player triggers a jackpot feature game.

52. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 50 ~~or claim 51~~ wherein said jackpot prize is contributed from a stand-alone machine.

53. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 50 ~~or claim 51~~ wherein said jackpot prize is contributed from a number of machines networked together.

54. (Currently Amended) A method according to claims 28 to ~~53~~ wherein said base game is a spinning reel type using a simulation of five adjacent wheels to present an array of randomly selected symbols in five columns and three rows.